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"THE JUNIOR COLLEGE: AN OVERVIEW."

In its deliberations on higher education in Wisconsin the Coordinating Committee has had occasion to discuss education beyond the high school other than that provided by the state's four-year institutions of collegiate rank. A fairly recent report dealing in part with junior colleges is of such pertinence to a discussion of post-high school education that portions of the report are herewith reproduced.[1]

* * *

"Rise and Growth of the 2-year college

The 2-year college is the newest unit of the American higher education system, the first recognizable institution of this type starting in the midwest around the turn of the century. In approximately 60 years the 2-year college has grown to over 650 different institutions serving in the neighborhood of one million students a year.

A number of factors have occasioned the rise of the 2-year colleges and have accentuated their growth. One of these is the increasing number of students enrolled in secondary schools and the number of high school graduates in the United States. Gradually this has crept upward until now over 80 percent of the youth of high school age are attending school. A second factor is the increased emphasis on vocational and technical training to serve American industries. As a result, an increasing need has come about for retraining workers to keep up with changing methods and the new technologies. Finally might be mentioned the growing complexity of our society and economy generally and its effect to produce an ever greater need for general education and adult education to increase the effectiveness of individuals in a new age.

In response to these social and economic forces, there is a distinct impetus toward decentralization in higher education. In the past, the common pattern was to "go away to college", but this is becoming less true as new centers for higher learning are being created. A great many factors have contributed in changing this design, some psychological, others economic and sociological. Greatest of all of these is the recurrent observation that many able students cannot or will not go long distances from home to attend college. Much of the decentralization of higher education in America is being implemented by the establishment of 2-year colleges of one type or another.

Functions of a 2-year college

Broadly stated, the main function of 2-year colleges is to bring more education to more people -- to be an instrument of mass education at the level immediately above the high school. Beyond this these institutions serve as centers of general

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[1] Taken from "The Role of 2-Year Colleges in North Dakota Higher Education". In Higher Education in North Dakota (Report of the U. S. Office of Education to legislative and educational leaders of North Dakota), October, 1958.

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adult education and of cultural activities in the communities where they are located. Because they are typically non-selective in their admissions practices they heavily stress student guidance and counseling services and the offering of a diversified curriculum to reach the broad span of interest and abilities found among the general population of high school graduates. Perhaps the most succinct statement of the specific objectives of these institutions is found in this statement prepared by the California Junior College Association:

> '1) Occupational Education: Complete training should be given to those students who will finish their period of formal education in the junior college. This training should be designed to achieve occupational competence and give opportunities to achieve civic and technical competence and personal adequacy for living.
>
> 2) General Education: Every junior-college student should be given that training which will prepare him to function effectively as a member of his family, and as a citizen of his community, his state, his nation, and the world.
>
> 3) College Education (Lower Division): Each junior college should provide lower division or the first two years of college work for those students who plan to transfer to a four-year college or university after completing two years in a junior college. This training should be broad enough to include the lower-division requirements in the liberal arts and in the scientific, engineering, and other professional fields.
>
> 4) Guidance: The junior college will help each student to help himself in the choice of an occupation adjusted to his interests, aptitudes, and abilities. A program of training and guidance should be provided, so that every student may discover his aptitudes, choose a life work, and prepare for the successful pursuit of such work.
>
> 5) Community Service: Every junior college should cooperate with other public educational institutions in providing instruction to meet the needs of all people living in the region. The program of training should include occupational and general education.' [1]

From the viewpoint of the 4-year college and university an important feature of the 2-year college is that it acts as a screening agency, allowing the 4-year institution freedom to emphasize upper division and graduate work. The students who transfer from 2-year to 4-year colleges generally have clearly defined their objectives, have learned to study, and are more confident of their ability to succeed in college level work. That they do so is amply proved by follow-up studies that have been made.

From the viewpoint of the State the establishment of these 2-year colleges is economically sound, for frequently many students live at home, thus lessening the number of college dormitories needed. In addition, the cost of education to the State is lessened in that the burden of support of the colleges is frequently divided three ways, with the student, the district, and the State each bearing a portion of the cost.

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[1] T. R. McConnell, Sacramento; California State Department of Education File, p. 52, 1955.

From the students' viewpoint, and this is the most important consideration of all, a great many students are given an opportunity for higher education which otherwise they might not have. This does not mean that every student who has the choice should go to a 2-year college. A student who has the finances, who knows what degree program he wants to study, who is sure that he is able to achieve his objective, and for whom there is a senior college available, may well be advised to go directly from high school to the 4-year college. For the others a 2-year college can provide a most needed service.

Types of 2-year colleges: advantages and disadvantages

From the standpoints of control and financing, there are four main types of public 2-year colleges in the United States: local junior colleges, district junior colleges, state junior colleges, and 2-year university extension centers.[1] Each of these will be described and evaluated briefly.

In a recent report of an analysis of types of 2-year colleges, it was shown that in 1955-56 there were 365 institutions in the United States that could be classified as public 2-year colleges. Excluding 23 normal schools, this leaves a total of 342 institutions. One hundred seventy-one, or exactly half, of these were local 2-year colleges; 78, or almost one in four, were district 2-year colleges; 21, one in seventeen, were state 2-year colleges; and 67, or about one in five, were university extension centers.[2]

Most of the off-campus centers have developed in states in which there is a single large state-supported university. Thus, at the time of the study cited, the University of Wisconsin operated 9 extension centers; the Pennsylvania State University had 11 off-campus centers, and the State University of New York had 6 2-year technical institutes affiliated with it. In this latter case, it should be noted that the six technical institutes are holdovers from an earlier plan in the state. Since 1948, New York has been implementing a community-college law which authorizes 2-year institutions to be established and operated under the auspices of a local sponsoring district; ten of New York's public 2-year institutions were thus administered. Purdue University in Indiana had five 2-year institutes under its control, and Indiana University operated nine off-campus centers. In these four states, therefore, were found over 40 of the 67 publicly-controlled off-campus 2-year units of baccalaureate-degree-granting institutions. Virginia and Texas each had three such units and were the only other states with more than one. Seven other states each had a single lower-division unit.

Local 2-year colleges

Local 2-year colleges are those operating under local boards of education, supported largely by local funds, and administered in the same system as the elementary and secondary schools.

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1 [1] S. V. Martorana,"Patterns of Organization and Support in the Public 2-Year Colleges", Higher Education, May 1958, p. 151-157.

[2] Ibid., p. 152.

Advantages:

1. They are locally administered and so can be responsible to the educational needs of the community. Their programs are not governed by some outside agency but can be locally determined and easily altered to meet local commercial demands and to keep abreast of changing conditions. This is especially true in the organized occupational and technical fields.

2. They are locally supported, which encourages parents to send their sons and daughters to these institutions because of the economies involved and because they are contributing to the support of these institutions.

3. Their programs can be articulated easily and closely with those of the high schools in the locality.

4. They can use the facilities of local school systems, especially such expensive ones as laboratories, shops, gymnasiums, and auditoriums.

5. Staff members in special fields such as music, art, and remedial reading can work at both the lower and the 2-year college levels.

Disadvantages:

1. In the college where the total cost of the student's education is borne by the district and the student, qualified students are frequently unable to pay their share and are thus excluded.

2. It requires several years to secure accreditation of the program offered. This may handicap the first few classes unless the other higher institutions are cooperative.

3. The cost of providing facilities falls heavily on the sponsoring district, as does the tax for current budget. Both of these costs, moreover, are borne by taxpayers who are at the same time taxed to support statewide programs of higher education.

4. Unless definite criteria governing approval for creating local 2-year colleges are set up and carefully followed, an institution may be initiated and continued in a situation where the potential enrollment and the assessed evaluation do not insure an operation large enough to be effective and economical.

5. Students living within the State but outside the district are sometimes required to pay the entire cost of their education. This frequently makes the fees required at the local junior college higher than at any other of the public higher institutions.

6. The administrative and academic "atmosphere" and requirements may be too much like those of the high school and not enough like those of a college.

The district 2-year college

The district 2-year college is distinguishable from the locally controlled and administered 2-year college in that the administrative district is not coterminous with a single high school district but may include several such school districts. Also the district junior college is governed by its own board of trustees. This type is common throughout the United States.

Advantages:

1. It has its own board which is concerned only with this level of education and does not have to devote its time to administering other levels.

2. The area encompassed in the college's supporting district can include the entire area from which the majority of its students come.

3. The entire area serves as its tax base so that the cost of its operations and plant can be spread over all of the area served.

4. It can be responsive to the needs of the entire area and as a result can offer a broader program than the local 2-year college. Moreover, it is often able to effect economies that result from a larger student body.

5. The college can more often have an identity and administration of its own and, therefore, operate as a true collegiate institution.

Disadvantages:

1. Unless some State support is received it is in a similar situation to the local 2-year institution and has the same disadvantages of limited local resources to meet current costs and to provide capital expenditures.

2. If there is a statutory mileage or bond limitation within the State, the college may find that one part of the new district is already up to the maximum. In this case, any part of the district may scuttle the building program or hamper the general operational development by refusing or avoiding the payment of its proportionate share.

3. It complicates the local situation from the viewpoint of taxes because the junior college district is superimposed over the high school districts. The taxable resources in both districts are, therefore, required to contribute to the support of two levels of education.

4. The program of district junior colleges must be articulated with both the high schools below and the colleges above, without the advantages of an administrative affiliation with either one.

State 2-year colleges

State colleges are controlled and supported totally by the State.

Advantages:

1. The college is viewed as serving the whole State rather than one community.

2. Fees charged to all in-State students are the same.

3. Statewide taxation for current operation and capital development is more equitable than local or district taxation.

4. Usually these institutions can offer a community junior college program and at the same time specialize in unique programs that are needed in the State but which would not be economical to operate in the local or the district 2-year college.

5. Since these colleges are a part of the State system of higher education, their programs can be more easily coordinated and articulated with the other units in the system.

Disadvantages:

1. The 2-year State college is not so responsive to local needs and there is less representation of local interests at the decision-making level.

2. It does not always secure the same community acceptance as does the local or district institution because the control and the support are at the State level.

3. It is continually in competition for funds with the publicly-supported 4-year colleges and universities which also are State-controlled and supported. This is a great handicap in states which do not have a state board of higher education.

University 2-year extension centers or branches

The 2-year extension center or branch is a part of a "parents" 4-year state college or university. It usually offers 2 years of study paralleling the offerings of the freshman and sophomore years of the parent institution. Often, also, it serves as a center for offering upper-division and graduate courses to special groups of students who can and wish to pursue work toward advanced degrees through extension study. Advanced courses in education for the benefit of public school teachers seeking graduate degrees is a good illustration. The operating policies and regulations of the branches are established by the administration and board of trustees of the parent institution. All fiscal management also is headed up on the main campus.

Advantages:

1. The extension center is immediately accredited as part of the parent institution. It should be noted, however, that this practice of immediate accreditation is under critical scrutiny now by the North Central Association and other accrediting associations.

2. An extension center may be established quickly because it is supported mainly by student tuition, or in some cases by an alumni group, a chamber of commerce, or a local citizen group.

3. The quality of instruction at the center is considered to be equal to the quality at the university supporting it.

4. Counseling and guidance of students, planning of their programs and their transfer to the parent institution are facilitated by the branch's affiliation.

Disadvantages:

1. It is developed to serve mainly the interests of the parent institution and its particular academic goals; the interests of the community are a secondary consideration. The extension center, accordingly, is largely academic in its program and seldom meets the vocational, technical, or adult education needs of the community.

2. The extension center is not responsive to the changing needs of the community. It seldom asks for any counsel or assistance in the development of its programs.

3. The 2-year center's financial operations are at the mercy of the parent institution. If the budget of the parent institution is reduced, the first place feeling the cutback is usually the off-campus centers.

4. In states where there are several strong 4-year colleges and universities, the extension centers frequently become sources of competition and conflict among the colleges that comprise the state system of higher education.

5. Students who plan to transfer to 4-year colleges other than the parent institution find more difficulty in planning their programs and effecting smooth programs of study and transfer.

Criteria for establishing 2-year colleges

In examining when and where 2-year colleges should be established or maintained, several factors should be kept in mind. These include enrollment (present or potential), resources for fiscal support, accessibility to students, proximity to other institutions of higher education, and evidences of community need, desire, and acceptance. While the specific criteria to guide action should in each case be determined by a state-level agency and careful study of conditions that exist, several criteria have been considered necessary and sufficient in studies made of other states.

Enrollment

Most studies have set an enrollment of 200 or 400 equivalent full-time students as a minimum requirement, depending on the comprehensiveness of the program desired; the institution which sets goals of a wide program requires 400, while most others consider 200 as a minimum. The potential enrollment is determined most often on the basis of the number of high school students in the district and/or the number of youth of college age, as well as the college-going patterns of youth in a state. Another valuable guide to the potential enrollment can be found by reviewing the number of high school seniors enrolled within twenty-five miles and the future projections of enrollments. If no other higher institution is serving this area, a conservative estimate is that one-quarter to one-third of the seniors may be expected to attend the 2-year college for their freshman work and one-third of the freshmen will continue for a second year. It is generally accepted that the cost per student increases rapidly and the program narrows greatly when an enrollment of less than 200 is found in a 2-year college.

Minimum financial support in various states

Studies made in other states of the cost for educating one student for one year in a public 2-year college show that these costs hover around an average of $500-$600.

In general, throughout the United States the support for the 2-year college comes mainly from three sources: student fees, state funds, and local district funds. In California, by law, there is no general student fee; the State and the district share the entire cost. New York divides the operating cost three ways, with the student, the district, and the State sharing equally. Buildings are financed equally by the State and the district. Other states provide $100, $200, $300 or more for each full-time student per year for operating expenses, and the district and the student divide the remaining cost. There appear to be three major principles followed:

1. The cost to the student should not be so high that a large proportion of qualified students are deprived of the opportunity to attend;

2. The public 2-year college should not be expected to charge higher student fees than any other institution of higher education that is publicly supported; and

3. In the case of local or district colleges, the state and district should bear the greatest burden.

Accessibility to students

Examination of the records of many of the public 2-year colleges show that the majority of students live within a twenty-five mile radius of the institution; from twenty-five to fifty miles away the percentages of potential students drop off rapidly; and beyond fifty miles a relatively small percentage of the potential students choose to attend. Such factors as the availability and condition of the highways, the severity of the climate, and the topography have a great influence in determining how accessible an institution may be.

Proximity to other institutions

All of the public and private institutions of higher education must be considered to varying degrees and in different ways as serving the educational needs of the entire state. The most important consideration for the entire state, should be, therefore, to serve the needs that are otherwise unmet, to attract qualified students, who, for one reason or another, are not at present continuing their education beyond the high school.

In this, it is not sufficient merely to consider the availability of other institutions. The availability of programs desired by the students is a much more important consideration. In locations where other colleges are nearby, each 2-year institution should attempt to achieve a degree of uniqueness, emphasizing mainly those programs which are needed in the locality that are not already available at the other institutions. While it is impossible to completely avoid the over-lapping or duplication of services, it must be remembered that duplication will raise the state costs. Such duplication is evidenced when two extension centers operate in one locality; when a junior college with a program that is mainly academic in nature is established close to a liberal arts college; or when two junior colleges are competing in the same area for the same students.

Evidences of community need, desire, and acceptance

The success or failure of a 2-year college depends to a large degree on the desire of a community to have the institution located within its confines, its willingness to share in the support and the community's acceptance of the college as a desirable institution at which a considerable proportion of its high school graduates will receive additional education. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that more than desire is needed. A community may have a strong desire for a 2-year college and may be quite willing to send the majority of its high school graduates to this institution; if, however, the enrollment which the community and the surrounding area can provide is too small to guarantee an effective and economical program and if the assessed evaluation is not sufficiently high to guarantee a reasonable share in the support of this institution the controlling agency at the state level should not be too greatly influenced by the wishes of the community."